Trusted Librarian: Service Model Offers Best Practices for New Subject Librarians

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Abstract

As we compete in the global market of information providers, librarians can advance by better understanding how corporations conduct business and provide services. According to the principles discussed in *The Trusted Advisor* (Maister, Green, & Galford, 2000), constituents may value trust more than discipline expertise. Business books often discuss trust building, which is viewed as a necessity for building professional success. Discipline expertise is a valuable commodity, but librarians who fail to build trust with constituents may struggle to engage them. This is a best practices piece that identifies successful trust-building techniques that foster relationships between librarian and constituent.

Keywords: trust, customer service, academic librarianship

Introduction

Prior to 2003 I spent two decades working in public libraries where I encountered various customer service models and training. From 2003-2013 I was the corporate library manager for a nationally ranked engineering and architectural design firm, and the success or failure of the library was my direct responsibility. I was a solo MLS librarian with clerical support staff to assist with circulation tasks. When I moved into a corporate library setting, I brought a keen sense of providing both customer and reference services. I was excited about changing library environments, but my expectations soon collided with reality. Each day I sat at the reference desk ready to offer assistance by email, telephone, or to visitors. In January 2003 I answered one question. The following month I answered three questions, but one of them was directions to a nearby restroom.

We have all experienced the traditional reference transaction we learned in library school:

1. Patron initiates contact (telephone, in-person, or web) and asks a question.
2. Librarian conducts reference interview and provides answer.
3. Patron leaves.

It was my comfortable pattern of behavior that I learned in library school. It worked really well in my previous public library jobs. What was I doing wrong and where were all the customers? I promoted the library on the company website and emailed flyers to department heads telling about all of our fantastic collection and services. I introduced myself to everyone I passed in the hallways, lunchroom, and parking lot. By the end of the first three months I had only answered 10 questions. I was accustomed to answering 10 or more questions each hour when sitting at the public library reference desk.

The last customer in March to ask me a question was John. Instead of taking the book off the shelf he requested and handing it to him, I started asking him questions. What is your expertise, how long have you worked here, how often do you use the library, and why not more often?

He explained that when he and other staff asked my predecessor (he could not remember her name even though she had worked there five years) to find information, she was typically unsuccessful in fulfilling their requests. Over time the requests for assistance dwindled. According to the office grapevine, when she decided not to return from a leave, the firm's owners debated whether to close the library or hire a replacement. The general attitude was that, if the next librarian did not work out, they would close the library permanently.

Sobel and Panas (2012) suggest that "power questions are important because they open the door to bottomless exploration and opportunity. Above all, they help you build relationships, win new business and influence others" (p. 179).

That single transaction with John, when I switched roles and became the one asking the questions, was when I gained insightful background information:

- I had to convince the firm's owners that the library was a valuable resource.
- The former librarian had lost personal credibility and that affected the library's reputation.
- The staff did not trust any librarian to assist them with finding the information they needed.
- The promotional brochure emphasized print and electronic resources instead of the librarian's expertise.

Librarianship can benefit by clearly bridging the gap between what constituents think we offer and the realities of what we do provide, and, in doing so, we become trusted advisors who build professional success and create sustainability for our libraries and ourselves.

Since I was not busy answering questions, I spent time reviewing the collection, analyzing the budgets, and ordering materials. There was a professional development collection that needed a closer look. It contained a lot of the bestselling business authors – Blanchard, Covey, Collins, Kouzes, and an author I was not familiar with, David Maister. Reviewing the collection led to reading about business service models. I learned that one of my mistakes had been to focus on promoting the collection and databases instead of highlighting the librarian's expertise, education, and experience needed to build successful relationships based on trust and confidence.

Maister is widely acknowledged as an expert on the management of professional service firms. He is the author of the bestselling books *Managing the Professional Service Firm*, *The Trusted Advisor*, and *Practice What You Preach*. Prior to launching his consulting career, Maister was a Harvard Business School professor teaching courses in the management of service businesses.

In an interview (Gluck, 2001) Maister indicates that being a trusted advisor is like teaching:

> There is [sic] very big difference between being the expert and being someone's advisor (16) …. As smart people, clients don't want advisors to tell them what to do. They want you to tell them their choices so they can make their own decisions: 'Help me understand my options. Help me understand the pros and cons. Give me a recommendation. Help me reason through to a decision.' That is very much like being a teacher, and it is very much different than knowing the answer yourself (17).

I remained at the design firm for 11 years, and over the years I averted potential library closure. How did I do it? I borrowed ideas from corporate America. I used *The Trusted*

Advisor's (Maister, Green, & Galford, 2000) principles and other bestselling trust-building techniques to build and foster engagement.

Service Models Provide Universal Application

Academic libraries and professional service firms share a number of similarities including the following:

- serving as "consultants" dispensing valuable information to our constituents;
- failing to retain and attract constituents can lead to downsized staff and closures;
- competing providers offering equal or better services;
- competing providers offering equal or cheaper rates.

Keeping these similarities in mind, business service models can offer universal application across library environments. In order to be constituent-focused, *The Trusted Advisor* (Maister et al., 2000) proposes that you need to earn trust before users will value your subject expertise.

Using trust-building principles to foster relationships can easily transition into academic library environments to enhance daily constituent interactions to build engagement. Building relationships through trust-building techniques ensures constituents view the librarian as a professional colleague and valuable resource who can participate in the collaborative research process. Your initial interaction with a new constituent may be performing a simple task, such as searching the library catalog or locating a book, but keep in mind it will serve as the first step to building trust. Reactions and responses from constituents throughout the interaction will determine whether or not they will consult the librarian in the future.

Knowledge of subject content and resources enable librarians to be an integral part of the research process. Within an academic environment librarians will work with faculty and students throughout the research process while meeting individual researcher's needs.

Researcher's needs will dictate the level of subject expertise needed, whether it is helping a freshman student to develop critical thinking skills or assisting an experienced faculty member to locate an elusive primary resource.

Often an obstacle to being client-focused is the idea that mastery of technical content is sufficient to serve constituent needs. Maister (Gluck, 2001) claims: "I in no way want to minimize the importance of being skilled at what you do. But technical content is not that scarce in the marketplace" (9). Librarians have experienced retirements, layoffs, and library closures; the latter situation often results in the remaining librarians taking on duties and responsibilities that are outside their areas of expertise. This reassignment supports Maister's concept that the best-skilled librarians will excel outside their areas of expertise when they develop additional skills, such as trust and credibility.

Can you think of an academic librarian colleague who is a phenomenal subject specialist, but perhaps his/her credibility, reliability, or approachability may turn constituents away from tapping into that expertise? When administrators review staff evaluations to compile a layoff list, the librarians who demonstrate subject expertise along with a loyal following of constituents may be viewed as more valuable than their colleagues who exhibit only subject knowledge.

In *The Trusted Advisor Interview* (Gluck, 2001) Maister states: "Finding somebody who can solve your problem is not that difficult. But finding somebody that you want to work with, somebody that you can trust with your problem, is in fact quite hard" (9).

As academic librarians we need to become embedded in our constituents' workflow so we can become an integrated part of the research project process. One way to become part of the workflow is to encourage clients to mention us by name, not the position title. In my early design firm days, a manager would send his/her employee to the library to see or ask for the librarian. Bringing an awareness that a librarian exists is a great first step, but it somewhat implies we are different than they are. When constituents use your name, it makes you part of their team.

The same pattern occurred when I began my current appointment. Professor A originally directed students to the library, which often resulted in students wandering around not knowing whom to ask for assistance. Depending upon day and time, his students may have ended up getting help from one of my work-study students, which was not the level of assistance needed. To ensure his students receive the help they need, he now sends students to the library who will ask for me by name.

Take a moment to think of the people in your own life whom you would label as trusted advisors. When selecting an accountant, childcare provider, dentist, or lawyer, what common traits do you look for when hiring them? Trustworthiness, dependability, credibility, and responsiveness may be viewed as highly valued traits. Building a respectful, collaborative partnership will help users become motivated and enthusiastic to use the library, and they will view the librarian as a trusted colleague who can participate in collaborative research activities.

Trusted Advisor Core Skills

In *The Trusted Advisor* (Maister et al., 2000) the authors discuss the three core skills of a trusted advisor, which include earning trust, giving advice effectively, and building relationships. They write:

> To see how the success of your professional career depends on trust, consider your own purchases of professional services. …. You can research their background, check their technical skills, and examine their past performance …. You want someone you can trust to do the right thing …. Getting hired (and getting rehired) is about earning and deserving

trust (p. 17).

Although academic librarians, unlike some of their corporate counterparts, aren't "hired" by their constituents there is a need to transform casual interactions into ongoing transactions, which can be accomplished through building trust. For example, I was helping Professor B track down a book she had previously checked out. She mentioned she was writing a book and had a deadline approaching. I mentioned that I once aspired to be a book editor and acknowledged the time-consuming process of researching and publishing. The following month she contacted me to say that she did not know if I could help her, but she did not know whom else to ask. She needed to secure copyright permissions for a photograph for her book. Even though she was in the final stages of preparing her manuscript, she acknowledged my contributions in the preface of her published book. I am currently working with her to locate primary resources for her next research project. This is an example of a constituent recognizing the librarian as trusted advisor.

When establishing trust, keep in mind that it must be earned and it rarely develops instantaneously. As with most learned behaviors, trust requires work and effort in order to be successful. Constituent interactions are an opportunity to demonstrate your content expertise and build rapport through simple gestures. One recommendation is to eliminate the phrase *trust me* from all conversations because "nothing is more likely to get the listener to put up his or her defenses" (Maister et al., 2000, p. 17).

After earning trust, the next step is to give advice to constituents. An advisor's job is to offer assistance and provide reasons for a course of action instead of a set of directions because most people will react negatively when told they must do something even if they agree with the actions to be undertaken. When working with constituents, it is important to be tactful to avoid being regarded as critical and reckless. Maister et al. (2000) write: "Proving to someone that they are wrong may be intellectually satisfying, but it is not productive for either the client or the advisor" (p. 27).

Building relationships is the third core skill, which includes finding common ground, displaying thoughtful feelings, and exhibiting support. Building relationships both in business and personal life often involves the same types of techniques: be the first to demonstrate you have something to contribute; listen for what is different not for what is familiar; keep asking questions; say what you mean; show an interest in the person; use compliments not flattery; and show appreciation; but keep in mind that isolated tactics will quickly be seen as insincere (Maister et al., 2000, p. 37). In *Credibility* the authors Kouzes and Posner write: "…[Y]ou build confidence about your trustworthiness by demonstrating your initiative and by reassuring the other party that you care about the situation and are doing something about it" (p. 107).

At the institution where I work, librarians are tenure-track faculty; however, the teaching faculty are not always aware of this similarity. A couple of weeks after starting my current position, I was standing behind the circulation desk checking out books to a junior faculty member whose name I recognized. I introduced myself as the new librarian and offered my assistance whenever he needed it but I never heard from him. A couple of months later, I was attending an event and found myself with a small group of teaching faculty, including the junior faculty member. He was lamenting over the issue that he could not conduct research in his office because students and colleagues interrupted him. I mentioned that as junior faculty, I too was experiencing the same challenge. He was surprised to learn that librarians were faculty. After mentioning that I was a faculty peer, his perspective of my librarian role seemed to change. Perhaps his changed viewpoint helped establish a common link because he now views me as a peer and he is more comfortable reaching out to me for assistance.

The next step in becoming a trusted librarian is to identify how you respond to constituents and your behavior patterns during interactions.

Transactional and Relationship Models

Maister et al. (2000) offers views of trust-building models: transactional vs. relationship. The authors compare the service models to dating and suggest reflection on "how you behave (or once behaved) in trying to build a relationship with your romantic partner" (p. 37). Maister et al. (2000) refers to these relationship-building concepts as the "Rules of Romance" (p. 37). Although it may seem an unlikely comparison, the two different models help us to identify our own preferences during constituent interactions.

The transactional service model (also known as the One Night Stand) is a single interaction with a constituent, but no long term relationship is established. When I worked in the public library, my customer interactions were always transactional. When customers asked for the latest bestseller, I handed them the book and they left. It is often a three-step closed interaction. You may coincidentally find yourself helping the customer in the future, but there is no connection between the interactions.

Transferring from public into corporate and subsequently academic librarianship meant shifting from a transactional to a relationship model, which required a change in attitudes and behaviors. While a transactional service model approach can be successful in many libraries, it may not be an effective method to attract new constituents and build a foundation of loyal library constituents in an academic library.

In a corporate or academic library your constituents are a captive audience. Your path will cross with theirs time and again, and therefore a relationship service model makes sense. In a relationship service model (also known as romance) the transaction never closes. It will branch off into an unrelated area of inquiry or a completely off-topic request. One day you may be helping a constituent to locate subject content and the following week you might be assisting with a topic outside your area of expertise, such as copyright.

As the head of a department library, my primary constituents are in the same building where I work. My library colleagues often assume this makes engagement easier, but it can be a challenge to connect with constituents in a meaningful way unless our paths directly cross. Embedded librarians may have an advantage when engaging user groups because of the greater likelihood of encountering the same constituents time and again when walking to class or grabbing a cup of coffee. However, the same trust-building techniques are effective regardless of disciplines or library environments.

Additionally, in an academic environment, if the librarian has teaching responsibilities, teaching faculty may be more likely to view the librarian as a peer and, in doing so, may extend more opportunities to participate in collaborative instruction. Academic librarians with additional appointments outside the library unit may find it easier to establish trust due to the fact they are part of another unit's team.

Depending upon the librarian and the library environment, both models may prove effective although each model has its own appeal for use. The transactional approach lasts for brief periods of time, and, although the interactions can be repeated, there is reluctance for future interaction. Technical skills and subject content are typically highlighted, which results in easily captured, quantifiable statistics. There is a clear distinction of tasks – you ask the question and I will answer it – which does not promote collaboration.

On the other hand, the appeal of the relationship model can result in the librarian being viewed as a trusted advisor within a collaborative team. The idea of a trusted librarian can lead to professional success and increased job security, along with creating a base of repeat and future constituents, which builds library sustainability. The relationship model offers more robust opportunities for engagement and creates effective work relationships. When constituents have placed their trust in the librarian, it can eliminate restrictive and time-wasting procedures. For example, constituents whose trust you've gained may allow you to propose ideas directly to them instead of spending time preparing a lengthy proposal.

In *Do You Really Want Relationships?* Maister (2005) writes:

> Many people have built their past success on having a *transactional* view of their clients, not a *relationship* one, and it is not clear that they really want to change. Stated bluntly, professionals say they want the benefits of romance (relationship model), yet they still act in ways that suggest that what they are really interested in is a one-night stand (transactional model) (2).

Earning trust requires making commitments and incurring obligations. It also means being selective: you cannot chase after every opportunity if you want to build relationships because the process also requires patience and time to allow for partnerships to develop. I rejected the transactional model and implemented the relationship model, which required a change in mindset, but it has brought professional success and created sustainability for the corporate and academic libraries, in which I've worked.

Engaging New Constituents

One of the easiest methods for librarians to use to engage new constituents is to conduct background research and develop topics of conversation. Uncovering unique facts can lead to unplanned engagement opportunities. For instance, during one interaction, a librarian recalled that the constituent was extremely competitive. When the constituent stated that he could find everything on the Internet, therefore not needing librarian assistance, the librarian suggested a race using the web to find the articles he needed (Franks, 2015). After several failed attempts to beat the librarian, the young constituent experienced a shift in the level of value he placed on the librarian and the library, and as a result he became a frequent library user and avid library supporter.

In order to engage faculty constituents, librarians need to promote positive relationships and serve as trusted collaborators to ensure the university's curriculum needs and research agendas are being met. We must proactively identify opportunities to raise awareness among constituents about librarian expertise, educational background, or tenure rank to build partnerships. Sharing information about previous projects you have worked on is helpful, but refrain from using the opportunity to name-drop as it can be perceived negatively.

Earlier this year, I hosted a Sanborn Map open house in my library's Rare Book Room as a means of promoting distinctive collections and supporting the curriculum. One of the attendees was a newly arrived Professor C who was unfamiliar with Sanborn maps and was interested in how he might integrate them into his course. Coincidently, he had a contract with a local municipality to provide consultant work and quickly realized how the Sanborn maps could be used as a previously untapped resource for his own work.

It is not uncommon for me to receive undergraduate student emails indicating Professor C mentioned he trusted me to help them use a specific resource. Through my own use of trust-building techniques, Professor C is one of my frequent library users for both his professional and personal research, and his willingness to trust my abilities also lead to an invitation to be a guest lecturer for one of his graduate-level courses.

Flawless Consulting (Block, 2011) addresses the issue of how credentials can be discussed during trust-building interactions. The authors suggest that directly asking constituents "are you concerned about whether I can really help you?" (p. 114) encourages open discussions. This phase of trust building is an opportunity to discuss previous employment or project work, which documents your expertise along with the value you can provide to the current work.

Today's technology makes it more challenging to create a lasting bond with library constituents because the reference transaction is not always a face-to-face interaction. Librarians are unable to observe body language or facial expressions, which often served as visual clues to whether or not our interactions were successful. There needs to be a prompt response to constituent needs, which includes routinely soliciting feedback and creating open forums for exchanging ideas. Sending emails, updating websites, monitoring virtual communities of practice, asking if the provided research met their needs, and showing an interest in their research area can be time-consuming tasks but necessary in building a partnership with constituents so they will return to the library time and again.

Trustworthiness: Credibility + Reliability

Kouzes and Posner (1993), the authors of *Credibility: How Leaders Gain and Lose It, Why People Demand It*, are leading experts on building credibility. They write: "Of all the attributes of credibility, however, there is one that is unquestionably of greatest importance. .…[B]eing seen as someone who can be trusted, who has high integrity and who is honest and truthful is essential" (p. 24).

You may know someone is clearly competent, dynamic, and inspirational. But if you have a sense that the person is not honest, you will not accept his/her message, and you will not willingly follow. Earning credibility is through person-to-person interactions and building a community of trust. The simple acts of shaking hands, leaning forward to listen, or sharing personal experiences can establish credibility.

Kouzes and Posner (1993) write: "… [P]eople will follow our advice and recommendations only when they trust our competence and believe that we have their best interests at heart" (p. 89). Best practices for boosting your credibility include building interpersonal communication skills and learning about your constituents. Often the first step is to practice open communication, which can be achieved by being accessible. Establishing an open-door policy or using various forms of communication is an opportunity to listen to your constituents to learn their stories, hardships, and research agendas. It is important to keep in contact whether through electronic or in-person interactions.

If a constituent prefers telephone communication instead of email, make a note to accommodate the preference in future interactions. One method is to reach out by providing assistance, such as contacting a constituent on a random day and mentioning you discovered information that might be of interest to his/her research. It is also equally important to identify what types of behaviors annoy your constituents and ensure you do not exhibit them during your interactions. For example, receiving unsolicited emails can be viewed as a nuisance, so consider sending minimal emails regarding issues that may be of high value to you (e.g., a computer generated list of all the new monographs acquired by the library) but that your intended audience may have little interest in reading. Although it takes more of my time, I will tailor the list to target my three liaison areas so the content is aimed to a specific audience, which increases the value of the content for the recipients.

The Speed of Trust (Covey & Merrill, 2006) and *Smart Trust* (Covey, Link, & Merrill, 2012) also discuss behaviors that establish trust. In *Smart Trust* the authors write: "In fact, trust has become the new currency of the global economy. It is the basis on which many people do business – or don't" (p. 13). As librarians we meet with a variety of university administrators, faculty, and students who provide continual opportunities for reaching across disciplines to build new partnerships. Constituents who value your assistance will share your name with others, which results in a snowball effect for expanding your constituent base. One way to gauge whether you are successfully building trust is whether or not you receive emails that mention a constituent has passed along your name to a student needing assistance. "Referral business is the ultimate example of trust as currency" (Covey, Link, & Merrill, 2012, p. 13).

In *The 13 Behaviors of a High Trust Leader* (Covey, 2006) the author writes: "A High Trust Leader is an individual who has unquestionably strong personal credibility, has the ability to create and grow trust with others interpersonally, and who is then able to extend that trust organizationally" (p.1). Leaders become trusted because they have learned how to maximize the outcomes of trust building while eliminating or reducing behaviors deemed distrustful. High-trust leaders are not determined by organizational hierarchy or tenure. A junior faculty member may exhibit behaviors and traits that are viewed as valuable, therefore creating an opportunity for leadership, while a tenured faculty member may fail to rally support for initiatives if peers view him unfavorably.

Edelman Trust Barometer

The discussion of trust would be incomplete without looking at the perceptions of how our constituents view trust. If our constituents are a reflection of the world at large, then the Edelman Trust Barometer provides insight into the always shifting viewpoint of trust.

The Edelman Trust Barometer (2014) is the firm's 14th annual exploration of trust. The Edelman website describes the company as the world's largest public relations firm with more than 5,000 employees in 65 cities, as well as affiliates in more than 35 cities. In the 2014 report

Edelman surveyed 33,000 people of whom 27,000 were from the general public and 6,000 were labeled as informed public respondents in 27 markets around the world. The survey responses show the level of trust in institutions, credible sources of information, specific world issues and general perceptions of trust in business and government.

The Edelman's website states:

> We believe that trust is an asset that enterprises must understand and properly manage in order to be successful in today's complex operating environment. Unlike reputation, which is based on an aggregate of past experiences with a company or brand, trust is a forward facing metric of stakeholder expectation (Edelman Trust Barometer, 2014).

Trust barometer findings can change over time because there are a number of variables that influence survey responses, including geography, socio-economics, demographics, or government stability. If there is a high level of trust, the perceived value of services will be equally high. My initial months working in the design firm mirrored this concept. The trust barometer reading was almost nonexistent. The library was viewed as untrustworthy and lacked value for its constituents. The library could easily have disappeared, and no one would have questioned its loss.

Conclusions

When constituents consider the merit of our usefulness, their perceptions are often based on our successful or failed behaviors. Some constituents may place high importance on librarians who exhibit availability, reliability, empathy, appreciation, and respect, while other constituents may value active listening, shared agendas, responsiveness, or providing updates. The challenge for librarians is to identify the diverse range of constituent needs and actively respond to those needs.

For academic librarians subject liaison responsibilities may force them to wear different hats to reflect the differences within constituent groups. For example, I recognize the architecture constituents prefer print and highly visual items, whereas my city/regional planning section embraces electronic communication. This knowledge of constituent needs transfers into everyday interactions. When communicating with my constituents I will tailor my methods of communication to meet their needs. For example, I will distribute printed flyers and hang posters for my architecture constituents while using listserv and emails for the city/regional planning constituents.

The perceived worth of our librarianship is important when discussing both personal and library sustainability. Constituents and peers who do not find significance in working with you will fail to engage and could indirectly impact your sustainability. Academic libraries are not immune to the same workforce issues found in other industries, such as job elimination or hour reduction, which could lead to career-ending outcomes.

In 2009 the stock market had already crashed, companies continued to go out of business, and people were still losing their homes. Clients did not have money to spend on new engineering projects, and the design firm's incoming revenue was shrinking. For three years everyone feared the second payday in February because it often meant there was a possibility of being handed a cardboard box and a layoff notice. Services and departments viewed as not integral to the success of the firm were eliminated.

If it had been 2003, the design firm's library might have been the first target for elimination. But 11 years later, the library and its librarian escaped elimination and thrived because the engineers, architects, planners, environmental scientists, and geologists now had a trusted advisor to help them navigate the murky waters of information and data.

Top 10 Best Practices

From my perspective, changing my view of client interactions, relationship creation, and trust-building techniques helped create sustainability for my librarianship. Using the trust-building techniques and the service models discussed in this article can build engaging relationships that may increase your professional success, and perhaps someday those techniques may prove advantageous when your career reaches a tipping point.

In my current academic appointment I continue to use *The Trusted Advisor*'s (Maister et al., 2000) principles and I am building relationships with my constituents using the same best practices developed while working in my former library environments. They include the following:

1. Acknowledge email within 24 hours, unless using your out-of-office email attendant, even if the answer is forthcoming.
2. Timing is everything. Engaging constituents is about discussing the proper topic at the right time. Ensure that conversations are strategic, not a rambling list of items you have been meaning to discuss.
3. Be a member of the team. Become embedded in the daily workflow by transitioning constituents away from asking for the librarian to asking for him/her by name.
4. Proactively reach out to constituents by passing along information you think might be of interest to them or value to their projects. This should not be viewed as an opportunity to clutter constituent mailboxes with junk mail.
5. We are all busy juggling a variety of duties and responsibilities, so develop a sense of when and how to contact constituents. Avoid forcing their schedules to work around your schedule.

6. "It's not about you. If you do all the talking, you learn nothing about the person. ….Your job is to gain information and create a vibrant dialogue….*Tell me more* is the magic key to open up the next layer of the other person's thinking and experiences." (Sobel & Panas, 2012, p. 85).
7. Keep your office door open. Display an eye-catching object inside your office to serve as an ice breaker. On my desk I have a Beanie Baby goldfish inside a fishbowl, and on a nearby shelf are two librarian action figures – both always spark conversations.
8. Socializing with clients is not necessary, being sociable is important.
9. Establish a human connection by meeting users in their space, by attending lectures, eating in the lunchroom, or hosting special events. Do not sit at a reference desk waiting for constituents.
10. Carry a notepad and a pen at all times because requests often happen when constituents see you in the hallway, the parking lot, or even the restroom.

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